

# SLANT

• As we predicted, the Eugene City Council this week revived the **Multi-Unit Property Tax Exemption** program, aka “tax breaks for the rich,” but at least it has some redeeming qualities. The council was under threat from Brian Obie and other developers that they would abandon their downtown housing plans without the tax breaks, but we’re not convinced they wouldn’t build anyway. Think about it. If you were a developer, wouldn’t you try to leverage every advantage possible to maximize your return on investment? Nothing wrong with that, other than that tax breaks deprive public schools and other services.

• Prof. **Guy McPherson’s scary predictions** of near-term human extinction are examined in our cover story this week. Some skeptics wonder if he’s just sounding alarm bells to draw attention and to sell his books. He was paid a few hundred bucks to speak at the Unitarian Universalist Church June 24 and donations were asked at the door. It appears he’s not getting rich, but likely funding his tour as he goes along. And he’s *not* getting a lot of attention; his dire warnings are mostly ignored in the media.

McPherson’s radical predictions might be taken more seriously in a year or two as the evidence mounts. A story in *Esquire* this week quotes climatologist Jason Box saying, “I think most scientists must be burying overt recognition of the awful truths of climate change in a protective layer of denial (not the same kind of denial coming from conservatives, of course). I’m still amazed how few climatologists have taken an advocacy message to the streets, demonstrating for some policy action.”

Regardless of how dystopian our future might or might not be, McPherson offers sound advice: Practice compassion and tolerance, live a life in pursuit of excellence and fight on for the survival of all species. Hard to dispute that.

• Post-mortems on the **Oregon legislative session** are a striking example of the fierce political split in this state and country. Democratic Rep. Jennifer Williamson,

who succeeds our Val Hoyle as Oregon House majority leader, has sent out a summary outlining how “we began to deliver on the promise that ... we would rebuild the economic ladder for everyone.” That includes paid sick leave, a retirement savings program, big investments in education, big expansion of voting rights and more. Meanwhile, *The Oregonian’s* editorial page, now one of the loudest voices of the right in this state, is not so sure about sick leave and retirement savings and considers it a “bright spot that the session ended without legislation to boost the minimum wage.” Hopefully, the Democratic majority in Salem will grow even wider with the next elections.

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• **New designs for City Hall** were revealed this week, and the project will go out to bids next fall. We speculated in *Slant* on Oct. 30, 2014, that cost projections used to justify replacing City Hall could be underestimated. If the new four-story, 30,000-square-foot City Hall is really going to be as energy efficient and “green” as promised,

the cost projection of \$17.5 million for the teardown and rebuild could turn out to be substantially inadequate. We hope we are wrong, but don’t be surprised if either the final cost is higher or compromises will need to be made, concessions that will diminish the final size, appearance or function of the building.

Will the new City Hall be net-zero, able to generate enough solar energy to meet its own needs and even feed excess electricity back into the grid? The “leading design strategy” is to hook up to a non-network power source, according to EWEB spokesman Joe Harwood. Right now, EWEB’s downtown system can’t handle network in-feeding and “it may take a few years depending upon advancements in technology,” he tells us. We don’t know the cost of bringing in a separate power source, but Harwood says the feeder line is near City Hall.

• **Biomass power generation** has always been touted by industry and members of Congress on both sides of the aisle as carbon neutral. Our own EWEB counts the local Seneca incinerator plant as one of its “renewable” energy sources. But the White House this week finally got around to studying the science and determining that burning trees to make electricity is a rotten idea in terms of CO2 levels in the atmosphere. Lane Regional Air Pollution Agency (LRAPA) ignored health warnings from doctors and allowed the polluting Seneca atrocity to be built, and we’re likely stuck with it. But hopefully this new White House position, backed by the Environmental Protection Agency, will dampen enthusiasm for future biomass incinerators.

• **Watch Joe Biden.** If Hillary Clinton stumbles badly, and that could happen, Biden seems to be keeping his options open to another run for the presidency. Is he too old or too prone to gaffs? Would Jeb Bush, Scott Walker or Marco Rubio handily beat him? We do love the progressive message of Bernie Sanders, but we are watching Joe. November 2016 is a long way away.

SLANT INCLUDES SHORT OPINION PIECES, OBSERVATIONS AND RUMOR-CHASING NOTES COMPILED BY THE EW STAFF.  
HEARD ANY GOOD RUMORS LATELY? CONTACT TED TAYLOR AT 484-0519, EDITOR@EUGENEWEEKLY.COM



EUGENE  
**SUNDAY**  
*streets*

**Downtown**  
**Sunday July 26**  
**Noon - 4 PM**

This **FREE** community event opens up the streets of Downtown Eugene to walking, biking and rolling in a car-free environment. The route connects activity centers with live music, free fitness classes, and much more in Monroe Park, Kesey Square AND Park Blocks!

Volunteers needed! Sign up here: [www.eugene-or.gov/essvolunteer](http://www.eugene-or.gov/essvolunteer)

For more information, email:  
[sundaystreets@ci.eugene.or.us](mailto:sundaystreets@ci.eugene.or.us)



[eugenesundaystreets.org](http://eugenesundaystreets.org)

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